

Chronology of history of George Rogers Clark Park

- 1754 Forced from Western Pennsylvania due to increased hostilities during the French and Indian War, the Shawnee settled in the valley of the Mad River near sites of prehistoric Indian villages. This represented the furthest migration of the Shawnee westward to this time, with the remainder of the tribe settling in the Scioto River Valley some years earlier. The Shawnee of the Mad River Valley formed two villages surrounding a large prairie, Peckuwetha and Kishpokatha Towns (Indian pronunciation), collectively called "Peckuwe".
- 1768 Tecumseh is born in Kishpokatha Town on the northern shore of the Mad River.
- 1779 Colonel Joseph Bowman leads an expedition against Chillicothe, a Shawnee village twelve miles to the south. Peckuwe grows in size with Indians from other tribes. The village serves as a base for British/Indian raids against Kentucky colonial settlements. Nearly 800 acres of corn are cultivated here to serve as food for the expeditions.
- 1780 In retaliation for raids on Kentucky towns, twenty-seven year old Colonel George Rogers Clark leads a major campaign against Chillicothe and Peckuwe. Kentucky enforces a draft and musters an army of 1,000 militia and regulars for the expedition. When the army reaches Chillicothe, it is found abandoned. Marching northward, Clark's forces engage 300 Indians at the Peckuwe settlements on the afternoon of August 8th, making it the largest battle of the American Revolution west of the Alleghenies. Both villages and corn are destroyed and the Indians move northward to the location of modern-day Piqua, Ohio.
- 1782 Indians again attempt to lure Clark into battle at the old village site. His force, again over 1,000 strong, engages in a few brief skirmishes, but the village site is never resettled. By this time, Indians have constructed villages in the Maumee River Valley, out of colonial reach.
- 1786 Logan's expedition against the Ohio Indians fords Mad River and encamps on the old battleground.
- 1790 Harmar's American army encamps on the battlesite as it moves towards an ill-fated campaign against Indians in Indiana.
- 1795 The first white settlement in this area occurs when James Lowry and Jonathan Donnell clear farmland south of Mad River and raise the first local crops.
- 1796 First crops of Donnell and Lowry flat boated down the Mad River and sold in New Orleans.
- 1799 A participant of the battle, Simon Kenton remembers the rich farmland and abundance of springs in the Mad River Valley and returns to settle with twelve families from Kentucky. Together, they construct a fort, "Kenton's Station", located near the present day Masonic Home. This is the first permanent town settled by whites in the valley.
- 1801 The town of Springfield is platted on the banks of Buck Creek.

- 1800-1809 The log cabin town of New Boston is platted over the ashes of the old Shawnee villages. Major roads pass through the community and several mills are built along the Mad River.
- 1812-1814 A blockhouse is constructed near New Boston to protect settlers against possible Indian raids. Hull's army marches through the valley and encamps on the old battlefield.
- 1818 New Boston and Springfield compete for the County seat and New Boston loses by only one vote in the state legislature. A town tavern owner remembers the history of the area and places a sign on the outside of his tavern reading "Birthplace of Tecumseh".
- 1840 New Boston begins its decline. By-passed by the National Road and later by railways, the town vanishes by the 1860's. The only visible sign is its cemetery.
- 1854 Daniel Hertzler, wealthy mill owner and local banker, constructs his bank-style home east of Tecumseh Road. The structure is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, through the efforts of the Clark County Historical Society, and is maintained by the Hertzler House Committee. Hertzler is murdered in this house in 1867.
- 1880 A major commemoration of the centennial of the Battle of Picaway takes place on the site with a reenactment attended by over 25,000 people, including the governor of Ohio. Sponsors are members of the Mad River Pioneer Association, forerunner of the Clark County Historical Society. The commemoration is deferred to August 9th because the 8th fell on a Sunday.
- 1897 The Clark County Historical Society is formed by local community leaders, many of whom were responsible for the earlier commemoration. This includes J. Warren Keifer, whose birthplace is on the battlefield.
- 1900 Leander J. M. Baker and his wife, Margaret S. R. Baker, donate twenty five hundredths (.25) of an acre of land to the Clark County Historical Society. "Said land is conveyed for the purpose of erecting and forever maintaining on said tract of real estate a monument to the memory of the American Soldiers, who fell in the battle of Shawnee (Town) which occurred on the 8th day of August, A.D. 1780."
- 1917 Historical Society leaders appoint a committee to investigate ways to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Picaway engagement. A. D. Hosterman is named as Committee Chair.
- 1920 The Monument Committee decides to seek additional land for a more imposing monument than a simple boulder with plaque. J. Fuller Trump, long-time benefactor of the Society, has already made the first contribution to the monument fund.
- 1921 The Monument Committee urges the Clark County Historical Society to apply to the State Legislature for an appropriation to create a truly worthwhile memorial.
- 1922 William W. Keifer and his wife, Martha S. Keifer, donate an addition ½ acre of land to the Historical Society. This land is contiguous to the Baker gift, and is intended to create an enlarged area for a monument. The land includes the Hertzler House and barn sites. The deed states that the site "be kept as a memorial of and to provide a site and

appropriate surroundings for a monument to mark the location of Piqua, the village of Shawnee Indians which was located upon or near said site and which extended eastward therefrom, and the birthplace of the Shawnee Indian Chief, Tecumseh, who was born at this Indian village about the year 1769, and the battle of Piqua, August 8, 1780, in which General George Rogers Clark attacked and destroyed this Indian village”. The deed also states that “this conveyance is a gift jointly from J. Warren Keifer, Jr., (who owned half interest in the land described herein,) and the grantor, William W. Keifer.”

- 1923 The Clark County Historical Society selects Chicago sculptor, Charles Keck, to execute the monument.
- 1924 The Ohio State Legislature grants \$10,000.00 to the Clark County Historical Society for the monument which is unveiled at an impressive ceremony with many national leaders present.
- Oct.14, 1924 In preparation for the establishment of a major state park, the Clark County Historical Society deeds its holdings to the State of Ohio. The deed was taken to the Records Office in Springfield by B. F. Prince, then President of the Historical Society. The amount of land conveyed was “0.73 acres, more or less”. A section of this deed reads exactly as the previously quoted section of the William W. Keifer deed.
- 1925-1929 Albert Slager, Secretary of the Historical Society, serves as Superintendent of the site for the State of Ohio.
- 1929 Governor Donohay appoints members of the George Rogers Clark Memorial Commission, formed statewide consisting of many local and state dignitaries. They are to investigate possibilities of commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Piqua and the Northwest Ordinance. Their recommendations include:
1. The creation of an Ohio Revolutionary Memorial at the site with a tri-state trail system.
 2. A major State park at the site of the Battle:
“... that the site of the Battle of Piqua be acquired by the State as a permanent park, and that a permanent building be erected, preferably a replica of the pioneer type of fort, one such having stood upon this battlefield as a defense for the Indian town of Piqua... and that there be prepared therein, or in another structure adjacent, a museum pertaining to Indian, frontier and pioneer days.”
- 1929 An architectural and topographical map is prepared showing plans for an “early Ohio Village” to be reconstructed in the area directly behind the monument.
- 1929 The Ohio Revolutionary Memorial Commission is formed,” appointed pursuant to the Act of the General Assembly, passed April 6, 1929, and approved by Governor Myers T Cooper, April 25, 1929, and filed with the Secretary of State April 26, 1929 (Amended State Bill Number 91 by Senator M. S. Kuhns) entitled ‘An Act to provide for the creation of an Ohio Revolutionary Memorial Commission; defining its powers and duties and making an appropriation for the work of the Commission.’ ”

Section 2 of this Act states: “There shall be an ‘Ohio revolutionary memorial’ to consist of (1) the Ohio part of a proposed tri-state (Michigan, Kentucky and Ohio) ‘Revolutionary memorial trail’ and (2) an ‘Ohio revolutionary memorial state park.’ ”

One section of the trail would go “South from Kenton... to Springfield, to the site of the Kenton stockade of 1799, to the Piqua battlefield on Mad River (1780).

The “West fork” of the trail would go “from Piqua battlefield to Dayton, West Carrollton, Miamisburg, Franklin, Middletown, Hamilton and Cincinnati.”

1929-1930 A Monument was to be erected “to the 19 Revolutionary soldiers killed in the Battle of Piqua and buried on the battlefield” as part of the overall plan of the Revolutionary Commission.

Section 5 of the Amended Senate Bill No. 91 Mr. Kuhns deals with the creation of an Ohio revolutionary memorial state park. It reads as follows:

“The Commission is authorized to acquire by purchase, part of the site of the Battle of Piqua as a permanent Ohio revolutionary state park; and is empowered to construct thereon a stockade or pioneer type of fort, of the kind which stood there, and to prepare therein, or in another structure adjacent thereto, facilities and space for a museum concerning Indian, frontier and pioneer days. The commission may improve the grounds and building thereon, as to drives, paths, fences, drainage, landscaping and the like for their use as a public park and educational memorial. The commission may rebuild or reconstruct the foundation, and the base and steps of the statue of George Rogers Clark now on site.”

Section 6 of the Act empowers the commission to purchase real estate, but the purchase must be authorized by the board of control.

The following persons were appointed to this commission by Governor Myers Y. Cooper:

A. D. Hosterman, Springfield

Miles S. Kuhns, Dayton

C. B. Galbreath, Columbus

Frederick W. Hinkle, Cincinnati

Mrs. Walter F. Tobey, Hamilton

H. S. Shetrone, Columbus

G. B. Fulton, North Baltimore

O. K. Reames, Zanesfield

Earl E. Rutledge, Kenton

The local Ohio newspapers of the day devoted many articles to the work of this commission. The Cincinnati TIMES-STAR reported on the development of the memorial trail stating “There is a great trail of history running from Detroit, Michigan, seat of the British Power in the west during the Revolutionary period through Cincinnati

to Harrodsburg and Boonesboro in Kentucky, farthest outposts of Colonial settlement. Along it moved British, Americans and Indians in a struggle for supremacy in the trans-mountain region. Near the center of this trail was fought in August, 1780, the Battle of Piqua, between the American forces under George Rogers Clark and the Shawnee and allied Indian Tribes along with British allies the only pitched battle upon Ohio soil during the Revolution. The project of the Ohio Revolution Memorial Commission speaks for itself. It is a significant step in the growing recognition by the people of the old west, that they were doing things of some importance at a time when, if you believe the New England historians, nothing was happening except along the seaboard.”

1930 Land is purchased by the Revolutionary Commission from Wylie E. Potts (the net amount of land being 201.205 acres) with the State paying the purchase price of \$21,126.52, thus creating George Rogers Clark Memorial Park. This land is contiguous to the 0.73 acres already owned by the State whereon the monument of George Rogers Clark stands. Included in this purchase is “a large old stone residence capable of being developed into a museum.” With the State footing the entire bill for the property, the Clark County Historical Society concentrates its efforts on raising \$5,000.00 necessary to sponsor the commemoration of the battle.

A sesquicentennial reenactment of the Battle of Picawey is sponsored at the newly created park attracting a crowd of 75,000, including national dignitaries and the Vice President of the United States. The observances are held in the fall rather than the actual date of the battle to encourage participation of local school children. The State of Ohio initiates appropriations to the Ohio Historical Society for park maintenance. They in turn pay the Clark County Historical Society for overseeing the site.

At this point the Depression curtails work at the site.

1936-1938 A. D. Hosterman supervises construction of the dam and a seven-acre lake in the park by WPA workers. He also serves as superintendent of the park after Slager’s death in 1932.

1943 The Clark County Historical Society presents a major report and recommendation for development and improvements at the park. These include:

1. A memorial forest,
2. a permanent scout camp,
3. permanent marking of grave sites of soldiers who died in the battle,
4. rehabilitation of the New Boston Cemetery,
5. An increase of educational programs on the site.

Concern over the apparent lack of regulations at the park, and, according to the local newspaper at the time, neglect by the State Historical Society because they had spread themselves too thin with the purchase of 44 additional sites, caused local citizens to express their opinion that a program be started to enhance the historical value of the park.

At the same time, a citizens group formed under the leadership of the Historical Society and the Chamber of Commerce to help implement the proposals for the park. This

committee later erects a monument to the engagement at the artificial lake, which is renamed "Hosterman Lake".

- 1958-1962 The State constructs U. S. Route 4 through the southern section of the park, thus decreasing its size by 45.15 acres. Construction could have begun as early as 1955 – many of the records pertaining to U. S. 4 are missing from ODOT District 7 office in Sidney, Ohio. Highway crews also remove 40 acres of topsoil from the park as fill for the new highway. The archaeological areas of the Kishpokatha Indian village site and battlefield, to the southwest of the park, are destroyed. However, the area of the monument and the village of Peckuwetha (directly west) are untouched. A petition by the Clark County Historical Society keeps construction of the highway away from the New Boston Cemetery site. All of the platted area for the town of New Boston is destroyed by highway construction except for the cemetery.
- 1961 House Bill Number 323 is introduced into the State Legislature authorizing the Director of Public Works to sell the park at auction. The Clark County Historical Society opposes this move and action on the bill is postponed.
- 1963 The State dismantles the upper portion of the Hertzler barn under protests of the Clark County Historical Society.
- 1964 Concerned over lack of funding for maintenance of the park, the State's 105th General Assembly votes to transfer the park to the City of Springfield. The bill includes the following restrictions:
1. The State reserves all gas, oil, coal, or any other minerals on or under the site.
 2. That the deed provides "...that those buildings, monuments, statues or the like, presently maintained as historical markers, shall continue to be so maintained in their present location by the grantee, and that the failure by the grantee to maintain such historical markers or use of any land conveyed hereby, for other than public park or public recreational purposes shall cause all right, title and interest to revert to the State of Ohio."
 3. That the State have access to the site for the construction of highways.
- Springfield accepts the park in light of developing it into two golf courses, a plan abandoned when additional lands could not be purchased.
- 1974 After years of non-activity at the park, the local Ninth Virginia Regiment begins programming there. These are the first costumed activities
- 1976 The Clark County Park District is formed.
- The Springfield Board of Park Trustees receives a \$5,000.00 matching grant from the State Bicentennial Commission to begin rehabilitation of the Hertzler House following a plan formulated by Floyd Barmann. The structure is placed on the National Register of Historical Places. Ninth Virginia Regiment programs continue at the site, attracting 7,000 viewers per weekend.
- 1977 Recognizing the need for increased citizen involvement in future developments at the park, Floyd Barmann, Martin West, Jerry Clark and Edgar Eberling form the Project '80 Committee. The committee is formed to address the full interpretation of the site by its

bicentennial in 1980. The 1976 Springfield Bicentennial Committee begins its second phase to also aid in preparing for the commemoration.

1980 The project '80 Committee officially incorporates as the George Rogers Clark Heritage Association and the State Bicentennial Commission issues a grant to hire Mr. Barmann as director to plan observances. The park and lands westward to Enon Road (700 acres total) are placed on the National Register of Historic Places as an archaeologically-significant area. (March 14, 1980)

The bicentennial reenactment of the Battle attracts 15,000. The City of Springfield awards a major grant to the local bicentennial committee for construction of a well, further stabilization of the Hertzler House and the reconstruction of the stockade. The Heritage Association, with the aid of the Ninth Virginia Regiment, reconstructs the stockade using research provided by Mr. Barmann.

1981 Boy Scouts hold a statewide camporee at the park. Two reconstructed Indian lodges are destroyed by vandals, one burning in less than ten minutes.

1982 Due to continuing budget restrictions, the City of Springfield investigates alternatives for the future of the park including:

1. Development of the site into a major campground,
2. Donating the park to the Clark County Park District,
3. Leasing the park to the Heritage Association,

No action was taken.

1983 The Heritage Association begins reconstruction of a blacksmith's shop on the site, the first structure in a planned museum to the village of New Boston. Under the direction of Mr. Barmann, the Heritage Association sponsors the first annual "The Fair at New Boston" in October which is completely rained out creating a deficit of nearly \$600.00.

1984 A private promoter sponsors a Bluegrass Festival on site, the first "for profit" event ever to take place there. The Heritage Association suffers another setback when the log structure that is being reconstructed is set afire by vandals.

The 2nd Fair at New Boston is rained out causing additional losses for the organization.

A major documentary concerning the Battle of Picawey, "War in the Wilderness" (written and directed by Mr. Barmann) premiers on WHIO Channel 7, Dayton, Ohio.

Dec. 1984 Faced with other financial commitments, the City of Springfield, in concert with the Chamber of Commerce, moves to trade George Rogers Clark Park to the Clark County Park District. In return, the Park District Commissioners trade a gravel pit located near the Clark County Fairgrounds for possibilities of future expansion of its new industrial park. A five year budget of \$15,000.00 annually is granted the Park District. After a number of unsuccessful levy attempts for the park, CCPD Board of Park Commissioners begin meeting to decide the fate of the park.

1985-1987 The Heritage Association decides to move the date of the Fair at New Boston to Labor Day weekend. Over 8,000 visit the park in 1986 and an estimated 12,000 return in 1987.

- 1988 The park is closed to the public because of undesirable activity in the park.
- 1989 Funding for the Park District runs out and is not renewed.
- 1990 Reports begin circulating that the park will be sold to a land developer. A group of citizens, headed by members of the George Rogers Clark Heritage Association, organize a public hearing to protest this move. The first meeting, chaired by James J. Campbell of the Heritage Association is held at the Warder Library in January, attracts over 100 people, including newspaper and television reporters. A second meeting is also well attended. In May, a new support group is formed to help the Clark County Park District. The name of the new organization is the "Friends of the Clark County Park District" and the first President is Ms. Mel Marsh.
- 1992 After numerous programs by the Friends of the Clark County Park District (FCCPD) and GRC Heritage Association, the park was turned around. A park ranger was in place all of 1992. With great success in public relations and an increase in attendance, the Park District received a budget of \$37,000 in Local Government Funds through the County.
- 1993 CCPD hires its first Executive Director, Melissa Dabe, who moves into the Hertzler House with husband Bryan as caretaker. Programs continue bring public into park. PD expands with the donation by Nelson and Peggy Wenrick of 145 acres of wetlands in Medway named Estel Wenrick Wetlands.
- 1994 CCPD hires James J. Campbell as Executive Director. PD Ranger Payton Holden moves in Hertzler House as on site caretaker. New programs are offered by GRCHA and FCCPD as the PD continues to expand.
- 1995 Battlesite property adjacent to GRC Park becomes available and PD asks public to provide financial support to purchase 27.5 acres. The Carleton and Ruth Davidson Trust steps forward with a majority of the funds needed including funds to purchase an additional 10 acres of old rail road right of way providing access to the Mad River under Rt. 4. Bud & Cyndy Jividen move into the Hertzler House as caretaker and office support. Don Rice is hired as full time maintenance using funds donated by Davidson Trust.
- 1996 PD partners with Greene County Park District to purchase abandoned rail road right of way from Yellow Springs to bring the Little Miami Scenic Trail to Springfield.
- 1999 LMST is dedicated on April 17 with Governor Taft in attendance. The Davidson Interpretive Center opens on the Peckuwe Village Battlesite as a result of a donation by the Davidson Trust. PD staff move into Davidson Interpretive Center from the Hertzler House. Bud Jividen hired as full time Park Manager/Ranger after completing Peace Officer Training.

